

Djibouti

Addressing the education needs of refugees

An influx of refugees from neighboring countries has created additional challenges for Djibouti's education system. With the support of the Global Partnership for Education, the Government of Djibouti will work to ensure that refugee students are included in its national education system.



UNICEF/Giacomo Pirozzi

Djibouti is a lower middle-income country with a population of nearly one million. Despite considerable economic growth over the past 15 years, 30 percent of the population still lives in poverty. More than half is under the age of 24, providing the country with an opportunity to capitalize on investments in human capital and promote social and economic growth.

Djibouti also houses thousands of refugees – mainly from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen. In early 2019, there were over 29,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the country. Almost 40 percent of the refugees are of school-going age – without access to quality education, their future is at risk.

Addressing the education needs of refugees

The Government of Djibouti, with support from GPE partners, is expanding its support for refugees by incorporating their education needs into the national education program. This is in line with the 2017 Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education, which commits the seven East African signatories to integrating refugees (and returnees) into national education systems by 2020. Recently, refugee-related data have been included in the Djibouti education ministry's annual statistics as well as in the 2017-2020 education action plan, which is a major step towards including refugees in education sector planning.

GPE is supporting the government to make public schools more inclusive for refugee children and to help the education ministry take on the operation of schools in refugee settlements formerly run by NGOs or The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The goal is to include the latter schools in the national education system so that the children's learning results and certifications are properly recognized. GPE has also helped bring partners together in the local education group (LEG), a platform for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between the government and its education partners. UNHCR recently joined the LEG, which has strengthened efforts to attend to refugee education.



GPE partner: Since 2006

Challenges addressed: Low school enrollment, low quality of education

Key interventions: Making education more inclusive for refugee students, promoting preschool learning, upgrading teaching practices and learning materials

Total grants: US\$26.5 million

Grant agent: World Bank

Coordinating agency: UNICEF

In 2017, GPE supported the country with an education sector plan development grant (ESPDG) to develop a strategy to increase school enrollment for refugee children in the 2017-2020 action plan.

Djibouti's education challenges

The relatively large number of refugees is putting pressure on an education system that already faces serious challenges in providing education for all children. According to the education ministry, in 2018 the enrollment rate stood at 14 percent for pre-primary, 93 percent for primary and 66 percent for lower secondary school. Furthermore, more than 40 percent of 6 to 16-year-old refugees are not enrolled in school.

The quality of education also remains a major concern. The 2018 Early Grade Mathematics Assessment test results showed that, on average, grade two students were able to solve only 1 out of 6 mathematics problems, and almost 60 percent had scores of zero. Additionally, 27 percent of students repeat grade 5 and nearly 30 percent repeat grade 9, putting further strain on the already stretched education budget.

GPE leverages more donor support for Djibouti

Making full use of its innovative approach to financing, GPE was able recently to attract additional donor co-financing for strengthening Djibouti's education system. In 2019, GPE brought together US\$10 million of its own funds, including US\$5 million from the GPE Multiplier, as well as financing from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the Qatar-based Educate a Child to provide Djibouti with a new program of support worth almost US\$30 million.

The program will support preschool learning; help enroll and retain more children, especially girls, in primary and lower secondary schools; and improve the quality of education by upgrading teaching practices and learning materials. The World Bank is GPE's grant agent in Djibouti while UNICEF is the coordinating agency for the education sector, supported by GPE to be active in particular in education analysis and sector plan design.

Through the program, teachers will also receive specialized pedagogical training to improve the quality of instruction as well as ensure they are provided with the tools necessary to help refugee children who have experienced trauma or chronic stress.

Past achievements

The new program follows earlier GPE support for Djibouti, which has assisted the government to rehabilitate and build classrooms in the most disadvantaged areas of the country; develop a student assessment policy; and demonstrate results of stepping up investment in teacher training: 82 percent of teachers are now demonstrating improved classroom practice.